

VZCZCXRO2732
RR RUEHBZ RUEH DU RUEHGI RUEHJO RUEHMA RUEHMR RUEHPA RUEHRN
DE RUEHSA #0606/01 0520704
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 210704Z FEB 07
FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8266
INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 0992
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1116
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA 0434
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1003
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE 0437
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 0473
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 PRETORIA 000606

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [EAID](#) [AU](#) [SF](#)

SUBJECT: AFRICA PEER REVIEW MECHANISM PRIMER

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11. (SBU) SUMMARY. The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) is perhaps the most developed and imaginative component of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), but has been slow to get off the ground. Only three countries (Ghana, Rwanda, and Kenya) have completed their review, although as many as six more (South Africa, Nigeria, Benin, Algeria, Uganda, and Mozambique) may be discussed at the next AU Summit in July. Drawing on the OECD peer review model, APRM is intended to be a voluntary, non-adversarial process in which African countries analyze their own progress toward good governance, develop a "programme of action" to address problem areas, and subject themselves to "peer review," with the goal of "reinforcing successful and exemplary practices." Post urges the Department to consider a financial contribution to the APRM Secretariat to support its efforts to improve governance in Africa and signal our support for an important emerging African institution. END SUMMARY.

APRM Background

12. (U) African Heads of State formally adopted the APRM Memorandum of Understanding in March 2003 at the NEPAD summit in Abuja, Nigeria. Based loosely on the OECD peer review model, the goal of APRM is "to foster the adoption of policies, standards and practices that lead to human security and political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development, and accelerated sub-regional and continental integration." The touchstone for the review is the "Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance," agreed to by African leaders in July 2002, which describes standards in four areas: democracy and good political governance; economic governance and management; corporate governance; and socio-economic development.

13. (U) The process is guided by a panel of five to seven "Eminent Persons," picked for their "high moral stature" and "commitment to the ideals of Pan Africanism." The current members of the Panel of Eminent Persons (also called the APR Panel) are: Dr. Dorothy Njeuma (Cameroon), Professor Adebayo Adediji (Nigeria), Professor Mohammed Seghir Babes (Algeria), Ambassador Bethuel Kiplagat (Kenya), Dr. Graca Machel (Mozambique), Madame Marie-Angelique Savane (Senegal), and Dr. Chris Stals (South Africa). The APRM Secretariat, which is based near Johannesburg, assists countries with their self-assessment and prepares the final Country Review

Reports. The Secretariat is headed by Dr. Bernard Kouassi, an Ivoirian national, and currently includes 14 professional staff.

14. (SBU) Three countries have now completed their APRM review: Kenya, Rwanda and Ghana. Six countries are in the final stages of their reviews and may have their reports debated at the upcoming APRM Forum in Accra in July -- South Africa, Benin, Algeria, Mozambique, Uganda, and Nigeria -- although the APRM Secretariat believes the Nigeria report will likely be delayed due to the upcoming April election.

15. (U) Twenty-six countries have voluntarily signed up as APRM Participating Countries, accounting for about half of the AU members and some 75 percent of the continent's population: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

Five Stage Process

16. (U) As described in the founding documents, African Peer Review is a five-step process. The first country review should be carried out within 18 months of joining the process, but the Secretariat is well behind that timetable. The guidelines also state that the review should take "no longer than six months." The three reviews to date have taken substantially longer.

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Stage One: Establish Structures and Self-Assessment

-- The first step is the self-assessment. Governments designate a person in charge of the process (called a "Focal Point") and a committee to lead the national self-assessment (variously called the "National Governing Council" (NGC) or "National Commission"). In preparing the self-assessment, NGCs should consult with civil society, conduct a survey using the standard APRM questionnaire, and interact with research institutions, culminating with a "Country Self Assessment Report." Of the three countries that have completed the self-assessment, Kenya and Ghana appointed a representative from civil society to be the "Focal Point" and had large, inclusive National Governing Councils (NGCs), whereas Rwanda appointed a government official to lead the process and had a much smaller NGC. (NOTE: The South African Government also appeared to try to manage its review process (see septel for analysis of the South African process). END NOTE.)

-- The most controversial aspect of APRM has been who controls and drafts the country self-assessment: government or civil society. Ghana and Kenya largely allowed civil society groups to lead the process, whereas in Rwanda and South Africa, governments exerted much more control. Civil society organizations have also criticized the lack of consistent guidelines. (NOTE: The South African Institute for International Affairs (SAIIA) hosted a detailed, two-day civil society conference on "APRM Lessons Learned" in September 2006. For a copy of the conference report, contact PolOff Tim Trenkle (trenkletp@state.gov). END NOTE.)

-- After completing the self-assessment, the NGC develops a "National Programme of Action" to address problem areas identified in the report. At the same time, the Secretariat begins its own research and uses the Country Self-Assessment Report and the National Programme of Action after it is finished to develop background documents called "Issues Papers."

Stage Two: Field Country Review Mission

-- The APRM Country Review Mission, made up of African experts and led by one of the Eminent Persons, then visits the country to assess the conditions on the ground. The mission meets with "all stakeholders," including both government and civil society. In constituting its review mission teams, the APRM Secretariat has drawn heavily on Africans living in the Diaspora. For example, the South Africa review team included former Liberian President Amos Sawyer (now a professor at Indiana University); Dr. Babacar Ndiaye, former President of the African Development Bank; and Professor Adebayo Ogunlesi, head of the Global Investment Unit at Credit-Suisse First Boston.

Stage Three: Draft Country Review Report

-- Based on its findings, the APRM review mission drafts the Country Review Report. This report takes into account the Self-Assessment report and National Programme of Action, as well as the team's own findings. It identifies the specific actions needed to address key challenges in the report.

-- Once the Country Review Report is finalized, it is presented to the country being reviewed for comment. Under the APRM rules, the country cannot change the substance of the report, but can correct factual errors. Countries are also permitted to provide a written reaction, which is amended to the Country Review Report. Of the three reports to be publicly released, Ghana provided 5 pages of comment, Rwanda 6 pages, and Kenya 56 pages. The country is encouraged to update and revise their National Programme of Action based on the Country Review Report's recommendations.

Stage Four: Submit Report to HOS/APRM Forum

-- The APRM Panel member responsible for that review then presents the final report to the APRM Panel of Eminent Persons. Once approved, the Country Review Report is

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considered by the African Peer Review Forum, made up of the African Heads of States ("peers") who have signed on to APRM. The Forum is held in conjunction with African Union Summits. "Peers" discuss the report, making suggestions for improving performance and (more likely) commending the country for best practices worth emulating.

Stage Five: Publish and Table Final Report

-- The final step is the publication of the report and its formal submission to key regional and sub-regional organizations, such as the Pan-African Parliament, the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights, the Peace and Security Council, and the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) of the AU. (For copies of the final reports for Kenya, Rwanda, and Ghana, see www.nepad.org/2005/files/aprm.php.)

View of APRM Secretariat

17. (SBU) Dr. Bernard Kouassi, Executive Director of the APRM Secretariat, told PolOff February 9 that he is "satisfied" by

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the progress of APRM to date. He noted that APRM did not want to merely copy from the OECD, but rather to create its own, African-led process. Kouassi also stated that the country reviews, if properly done, should draw on sophisticated survey research.

¶18. (SBU) Kouassi's biggest concern is that countries view APRM as a "scorecard." He believes this approach will undermine the initiative by creating competition between countries. Kouassi stressed that the goal of APRM is to "enhance national dialogue in the areas of governance and economic management" and share best practices. He recounted the story of meeting Botswanan President Mogae, who told him that Botswana did not need to join APRM because it already had good policies and structures in place. Kouassi told Mogae that Botswana should share its experience with other countries. Mogae agreed to donate USD 100,000 to the APRM Secretariat, and Kouassi expects Botswana to join the process

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soon.

¶19. (SBU) The APRM Secretariat receives 70 percent of its funding from African countries. There are two trust funds that manage the Secretariat's resources, one controlled by UNDP and the other by the Development Bank of Southern Africa. The major international donors are DFID (USD 2 million contribution), Germany (Euro 1 million commitment, plus in-kind contributions), Canada, and Spain. The EU would like to provide resources, but an EU Development Officer told PolOff that they have been frustrated by the Secretariat's refusal to provide a funding proposal. Dr. Kouassi also noted that many donors have supported the APRM reviews in individual countries through funding National Governing Councils or civil society participation in the process.

Comment and Recommendation

¶10. (SBU) The African Peer Review Mechanism is perhaps the most significant and innovative development of the NEPAD initiative. While the process is new and somewhat clumsy, we believe APRM has the potential to play a positive role in improving governance in Africa through facilitating a healthy national dialogue between government, civil society, and business on the key challenges facing a country. The fact that APRM is African-created and African-led enhances its credibility, allowing for criticisms that might be seen as "neo-colonial" if they came from North America, Europe, or the IFIs. The key issue appears to be whether governments view APRM as a "check the box" exercise or a genuine process of national dialogue, consultation, and planning.

¶11. (SBU) While it is too soon to judge whether the peer review process will have any long-term impact on improved governance in Africa, we believe APRM is an important emerging institution worth following and supporting. We urge the Department and USAID to consider funding the APRM Secretariat and/or civil society participation in reviews in

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African countries.
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